

UCL Council members

UCL's LGBTQ+ Equality Steering Group (LESG)

UCL confirming its withdrawal from the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme and the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.

1. The decision was taken in a unilateral fashion by UMC, in disregard of the express views of wide sections of the UCL community, in disregard for due process and transparency.
2. Academic Board is not representative of the diverse UCL community and did not provide an opportunity for those most directly impacted by the decision to speak or otherwise contribute.
3. The argument regarding Stonewall as a threat to 'academic freedom' on which the decision appears to have been based has not been clearly articulated and is not supported by evidence.
4. We are concerned that this is the first stage in a process of withdrawal from the Stonewall schemes.
6. We fear that the way in which the Stonewall question was handled with exclusive weight given by UMC to Academic Board suggests that the UCL community is being sidelined during the implementation of Stonewall and looks set to be further disempowered by the implementation of the Workplace Equality Index. We are concerned that the implementation of the Workplace Equality Index will eliminate a key mechanism by which the UCL Community can hold college leaders to account.
8. Academic Board and senior leaders at UCL have severely damaged the trust of LGBTQ+ staff and students at UCL, who believe that their rights and interests have been knowingly devalued by the institution.

That the assessment process for UCL's involvement with Stonewall be reviewed and the assessment process be carried out again, with full transparency.

Dear UCL Council Members

In December 2021, UCL University Management Committee (UMC) made the decision to cut ties with Stonewall entirely and not re join either the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (WEI) or the Diversity Champions programme. The decision was based on a vote by Academic Board (AB), which recommended that UCL should not re join the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme (59%) or the Workplace Equality Index (57%). The abrupt decision to leave Stonewall without having an alternative in place, when there had previously been an intention to submit to the 2022 Workplace Equalities Index, demonstrates a lack of commitment on the part of senior leaders to protect LGBTQI+ staff and students.

We write to express our grave concerns about both the decision and the process by which it was reached, on the following grounds:

1. The decision was taken in a unilateral fashion in disregard of the express views of wide sections of the UCL community:

Prior to the vote at AB, the matter of UCL's relationship with Stonewall had been voted on by the EDI Committee, UCL's LGBTQI+ Equality Steering Group (LESG), Out@UCL, Friends of Out@UCL, UCU and Unison. These entities represent both professional experts on the matter at hand and members of the UCL community who are personally affected. In each case, members voted for UCL to re join both the Diversity Champions Scheme and WEI. Most of these votes were self organised, reflecting the critical importance of this issue to large sections of the UCL staff and student community, and some were passed with significant majorities.

We are unaware of any attempt at wider community consultation by senior management and it is unclear how the viewpoints and recommendations of the wider community were weighted when UMC reached a decision. What is clear is that UMC disregarded the recommendation made by its own EDI

No evidence has been presented to date where academic freedom has been limited or hampered due

Board will be used as a tool to regulate any EDI recommendations made by the EDI Committee and respective steering/implementation groups in future.

7. UCL's LGBTQI+ Equalities Steering Group (LESG) has been side lined during the debate on Stonewall and looks set to be further disempowered by the Implementation Group. This will eliminate a key mechanism by which the UCL Community can hold college accountable

LESG has a direct and tangible connection to the communities that it represents via its members and via the networks that it manages, such as Out@ UCL and the staff led UCL Trans Network. Despite being run entirely by volunteers, LESG has a history of impact